

News from the University of St. Thomas

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University of St. Thomas Selected to Join Prestigious Changemaker Campus Consortium

St. Paul, MN (April 4, 2017) – In a rapidly changing world, university students seek interdisciplinary, entrepreneurial and solutions-oriented learning experiences to meet their potential. This learning helps students become “changemakers” — people who are empowered to help find lasting solutions to social and environmental problems.

Now, the University of St. Thomas has received the distinctive honor of being named a Changemaker Campus by [Ashoka U \(Ashokau.org\)](http://AshokaU.org), a global consortium working to inspire a culture of social innovation and changemaking in higher education. St. Thomas becomes the first in Minnesota and joins 37 others in the Changemaker Campus consortium, which includes Arizona State University, Boston College, Brown University, Duke University, Marquette University, Tecnológico de Monterrey, and Singapore Management University.

“By designating St. Thomas as a Changemaker Campus, Ashoka U recognizes our deep commitment to creating an educational environment in which all can collaborate to create a more equitable and sustainable world,” said University of St. Thomas President Julie Sullivan. “It also recognizes the university’s innovative social entrepreneurship education and research across disciplines.”

Becoming a Changemaker Campus is a result of the strategic plan: [St. Thomas 2020](#). The Ashoka designation furthers the university mission to create morally responsible leaders who *think critically, act wisely and work skillfully to advance the common good*.

Students expect to make a difference

Students’ expectations from their educational experiences are changing: 72 percent say that having a job “where I can make a difference” is very important and 65 percent expect to make a social or environmental impact through their work, according to a 2012 Net Impact study conducted by Rutgers University and supported by the MacArthur Foundation.

“Industries are evolving and morphing with the effects of globalization and technological change at faster and faster rates” said Ashoka U’s co-founder and executive director Marina Kim. “Many jobs that students expect upon graduation may no longer exist by the time they finish school — and conversely, many of the jobs of the future do not exist today. In such a fast-changing world, skills like learning how to be adaptive, entrepreneurial, collaborative and able to solve complex problems

are increasingly transferrable to any organization, industry or career path. Adding in the ability to navigate in this complex world and contribute to social impact will only make universities more relevant to students."

Social Innovation at St. Thomas

Ashoka recognized St. Thomas for creating a culture of changemaking across the university. They noted St. Thomas' commitment to changemaking through volunteer activities, and extensive class partnerships with community organizations, such as the [Sustainable Communities Partnership](#) that collaborates with local cities and governments to serve their sustainability needs through St. Thomas courses.

Ashoka cited efforts in the [Opus College of Business to spawn and support social ventures](#) such as [Love Your Melon](#), an apparel brand that donates half its profits to pediatric cancer research. And they noted the unique contributions of [BrightSide Produce](#) to develop an economically sustainable model to address local food insecurity through partnerships between area teens, university students, and corner stores in North Minneapolis. Ashoka also pointed to St. Thomas' unique interdisciplinary offerings such as [Peace Engineering](#), a collaboration between the School of Engineering and the Department of Justice and Peace Studies, and the [Interprofessional Center](#), a collaboration of the Schools of Law, Social Work and Psychology to help clients in need.

Other key changemaking initiatives at St. Thomas increase educational access and enhance collaboration. Ashoka noted St. Thomas' commitment to reducing the educational opportunity and prosperity gap by launching the two-year associates degree at [Dougherty Family College](#), which will provide low-income students a pathway to thrive in college. St. Thomas' leadership in [interfaith](#) cooperation also drew particular attention, including its programs that engage people of all faiths on and off campus.

This designation is only the beginning of a process to help students find meaning while working to create a more just and equitable world. "Being a Changemaker Campus will open doors to significant, long-term partnerships with [global institutions](#) and within our own community," said Adam Kay, St. Thomas Director of Social Innovation. "We look forward to the increased opportunities for our students, faculty, and staff to help solve some of the really tough social challenges we are facing."

About the University of St. Thomas: Located in St. Paul, Minn., the University of St. Thomas is a private comprehensive university that emphasizes values-based education and career preparation. With approximately 10,000 students, it is Minnesota's largest independent college or university. The university welcomes students of all ages, religions, races and financial backgrounds. Inspired by Catholic intellectual tradition, the University of St. Thomas educates students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good. The university has three campuses: St. Paul, Minneapolis and Rome, Italy.

About Ashoka

Founded in 1980, [Ashoka](#) is the largest global network of social entrepreneurs and changemakers. Ashoka seeks to contribute to an Everyone a Changemaker world where every young person grows up to become an adult changemaker, capable of taking creative action to solve a social problem; a world where the development of young changemakers and the practice of changemaking are the norm.

Ashoka's vision and understanding of the world comes from its experience in pioneering the field of social entrepreneurship over the last 35 years—finding, selecting, and supporting the world's leading social entrepreneurs (Ashoka Fellows). The network of more than 3,300 Ashoka Fellows is implementing system-changing solutions to human and environmental problems in over 80 countries.

Ashoka's work with Ashoka Fellows helps it see patterns of social development across various fields, providing key levers and a new framework for living in the world as a changemaker. Ashoka helps people see the world differently so they can do differently, fully participating in the new environment. For example, Ashoka is building and activating networks to create fundamental changes in the growing up experience of children and young people so that everyone can become a changemaker.

About Ashoka U

Ashoka U catalyzes social innovation and changemaking in higher education through a global network of entrepreneurial students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community leaders. Building on Ashoka's vision for a world where "Everyone is a Changemaker," Ashoka U takes an institutional change approach to ultimately impact the education of millions of students. We collaborate with colleges and universities to break down barriers to institutional change and foster a campus-wide culture of social innovation and changemaking.

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